

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC SCHOOL



المدرسة الأكاديمية الدولية

READING POLICY

APPROVED BY: PRINCIPAL	DEPARTMENT: ACADEMIC	REVIEW ANNUALLY	PUBLICATION DATE: JULY 2025
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Statement of Intent

Our aim for reading at International Academic School is to promote high standards of literacy by equipping students with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment.

To promote high standards of literacy at International Academic School, we aim to ensure that all students:

- meet the National Agenda target to ensure that the students in the UAE rank among the best in the world in reading
- read easily, fluently and with good understanding at or above expected Lexile Levels
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- are competent in the skills of speaking and listening, asking, and responding to questions and participating in discussions, demonstrating understanding of what they have read.

The Teaching of Reading

Reading sessions, across the school, focus on developing pupils' competence in both word recognition and comprehension as outlined in the California Common Core State Standards. Skilled word reading involves decoding unfamiliar words and recognizing familiar words. At International Academic School, our understanding that the letters on the page represent the sounds in spoken words begins in KG, whereby phonics is emphasized in the early teaching of reading to secure independent decoding. This is achieved by the implementation of the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program. As pupils progress to the Elementary and Middle/High School; greater emphasis is placed on whole text understanding through skim, scan and reading for meaning skills development and understanding the implications of the social, historical, and cultural context of a given text.

Primary School

Early Years:

In KG, reading is promoted across the curriculum. Children are encouraged to read through continuous access and exposure to books in dedicated reading areas, both indoors and outdoors. Furthermore, wherever possible, books are displayed as a stimulus for learning and discovery in continuous provision, for example, in the Sand or Construction Areas. In lesson planning, texts are frequently used as a focus for learning, both fiction and non-fiction. In Pre-KG, a half-term topic is dedicated to the work of author, Julia Donaldson. In both Pre-KG and KG1, the children learn about traditional tales and develop an appreciation of books using the skills of Talk for Writing as described by Pie Corbett. Dress-up days such as Witches' and Wizards' Day (Room on the Broom) and special events such as our Gruffalo Crumble picnic help to promote a love of books, characters, and storylines. Phonics and Phonemic Awareness are introduced in Pre-KG using the **Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program** enhanced by resources from HMH. Simultaneously, children are introduced to a structured **IAS Storytelling Program** which develops the language and skills of storytelling. The children's progress is monitored carefully as they move through the approach through termly assessments of each child, and additional support is put in place, if required. All KG classes go to the library every other week and have shared story time in classes several times a week. Reading fluency and comprehension is supported through individual reading with the teacher and Teaching Assistant and questioning is used during this time to consolidate and extend children's comprehension. **Grade-specific** word lists of decodable and high frequency words to practice are also sent home. Throughout the year, online activities, and apps e.g., **Khan Academy Kids**, are shared with parents to support and encourage reading and literacy skills.

Lower Elementary:

In Grades 1 and 2, children are taught phonics and reading through the **Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program** daily. They are streamed based on their phonetic knowledge and read books selected to match their reading ability. The children are taught to read and spell words, through blending and segmenting phonemes. They are also taught to read and spell **high frequency words and tricky words**, which cannot be segmented phonetically. In Grade 1, planning of phonics allows children to use and apply new learning through a range of activities. Whereas in Grade 2, planning is based on an initial assessment of the phonemes and lessons are used to close gaps and allow children to practice and apply the phonemes within a context. Reading interventions take place in both grade level groups to develop fluency as well as consolidate understanding and application of phonemes.

Guided Reading is taught for 2 hours each week in Lower Elementary. In Grade 1, teachers frequently use Guided Reading assessments in relation to the reading skills by focusing on a different reading skill each week, for example inference. Lower Elementary, we encourage the use of parent volunteers during Guided Reading lessons to enable children to read to additional adults on a regular basis.

School library visits are scheduled each week to support and develop the habit of reading for pleasure, in both English and Arabic. During this time children are having a 'story time' whereby they can discuss themes and key features of the story, as well as develop their own opinions of the text.

Upper Elementary:

In Grades 3 to 5, **two lessons per week are allocated to teach Guided Reading**. These are skills-based sessions focusing on reading objectives in line with curriculum expectations and ensuring acquisition and application of higher order reading skills. Guided Reading sessions are purposeful and allow children to work independently as well as with an adult. A different focus group is taught by the teacher during each session, whereby the children will be taught new skills to progress with their Reading. Activities are then carried out to follow up with the text focus and promote the application of skills previously taught. Teachers carry out regular formal and informal assessment of students' reading abilities during this lesson.

Children also **visit the library once a week** where there is a collection of books of various genres in both English and Arabic languages. There are increased opportunities to use the school library to promote reading for pleasure and develop research skills.

In Upper Elementary all students are assigned and choose books from the **RAZ-Plus library**. The RAZ-Plus application allows pupils to read books within a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) range that is appropriate and accessible for the child as well as providing a level of challenge. Once children have read their chosen book, they are given an opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension by completing an **online quiz** linked to their book (fiction or non-fiction). They are also able to widen their range of higher-level vocabulary by completing a **vocabulary quiz** linked to their book. This application is also incentivized by obtaining prizes at key milestones to further develop the motivation and love of reading.

Home Reading

Reading at home is an expectation for all children each evening to support the children's progress and increase fluency and understanding.

In the Early Years and Lower elementary, there is an expectation that **Student Reading Logs** are signed daily to evidence reading done at home, with an adult. When children have been moved up a 'Lexile Level' this is recorded in the Reading Log to keep parents informed.

In Upper Elementary, children are encouraged to record their RAZ-Plus reading progress at the back of their Student Reading Logs. Parents are well informed of their child's progress on the RAZ-Plus application through regular updates. Children are expected to read at home alone, with an adult or be read to each evening for 20 minutes. Parents are encouraged to visit the RAZ-Plus application with their child and engage in discussions about the text, to form connections to the book as well as a promote the enthusiasm to read.



Home Reading is purposeful as children's reading targets are shared three times a year with parents through school reports. These reading targets are shared with children as part of their personalized learning so that they are aware of their current achievements and their next steps in learning.

Pupils are assigned their reading levels following assessments, and 'Lexile Levels' are used to ensure they are reading at the appropriate level.

Grades (6 - 9)

Strategies for Developing Whole School Development of Literacy

In the Middle & High School we believe that tackling the literacy demands in all our subjects will increase the students' chance of success. We recognize that literacy skills are both general and subject specific. As such the schools operates a policy that recognizes the differences between faculties, and how priorities and focus areas can vary between them. There is a standard set of focus areas that all strategies can fit under; as below

1. Prioritize 'disciplinary literacy' across the curriculum
 - Literacy is key to learning across all subjects in secondary school and a strong predictor of outcomes in later life.
 - Disciplinary literacy is an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum that emphasizes the importance of subject specific support.
 - All teachers should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.
2. Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject
 - Teachers in every subject should provide explicit vocabulary instruction to help students access and use academic language.
 - Effective approaches, including those related to etymology and morphology, will help students remember new words and make connections between words. Teachers should prioritize teaching Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary, which students are unlikely to encounter in everyday speech
3. Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts
 - Training focused on teaching reading is likely to help secondary school teachers teach their subject more effectively.
 - To comprehend complex texts, students need to actively engage with what they are reading and use their existing subject knowledge.
 - Reading strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, prediction, and questioning, can improve students' comprehension.
4. Break down complex writing tasks
 - Writing is challenging and students in every subject will benefit from explicit instruction in how to improve.
 - Teachers can break writing down into planning, monitoring and evaluation, and support students by modelling each step.
 - Targeted support should be provided to students who struggle to write fluently, as this may affect writing quality
5. Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject



- Combining reading activities and writing instruction is likely to improve students' skills in both, compared to a less balanced approach.
 - Reading helps students gain knowledge which leads to better writing, whilst writing can deepen students' understanding of ideas.
 - Students should be taught to recognize features, aims and conventions of good writing within each subject.
6. Provide opportunities for speaking
- Speaking matters: both on its own and because of its impact on other aspects of learning.
 - High quality talk is typically well structured and guided by teachers.
 - Accountable talk is a useful framework to ensure talk is high quality and emphasizes how talk can be subject specific.
7. Provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students
- Schools should expect and proactively plan to support students with the weakest levels of literacy, particularly in Grade 6.
 - Developing a model of tiered support, which increases in intensity in line with need is a promising approach.
 - Assessment should be used to match students to appropriate types of intervention, and to monitor the impact of interventions

Students develop reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills in Middle & High School. Students are exposed to range of different text types and reading strategies to decode the information.

Spelling Bee – Middle School

Our students in Grades 6-8 are given a list of challenging and complex vocabulary (both in meaning and spelling) to learn as part of a Middle School competition. Teachers equip students with the skills to be able to learn, drill and quiz themselves, to ensure that this vocabulary becomes more familiar over time. We have ensured that these words are those which are Tier 2, whereby they are not just specific to their studies in English and are therefore transferable and can be used in a variety of subjects and contexts. Students can also learn the vocabulary outside of school, before taking part in a class competition. This will ultimately lead up to a celebration in the form of a 'Spelling Bee' where students compete as representatives of their Homerooms, by spelling the most words correctly.

Increasing Tier 2 vocabulary usage across the curriculum – Middle & High School

Leading on from our Middle School spelling bee, we ensure that we equip our learners at all levels to extend their vocabulary as standard. We are putting an increased focus on 'Tier 2 vocabulary' which increases the use of sophisticated vocabulary and can be used across the curriculum. One approach in doing this, for example, is the use of 'Freyer Diagrams' where students focus on their basic vocabulary usage and independently find ways to improve and expand on this. Students are regularly reminded of the importance of using this vocabulary outside of the English classroom. We are also exploring wider opportunities to raise the profile of Tier 2 vocabulary outside of the English classroom.



ATHENA EDUCATION

For Social Grace

Reading Challenge – Middle School

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Building on from a pilot scheme in the previous academic year, we are delighted to be offering an extended reading challenge across the Middle School Grades. Students are provided with a vast list of 'approved suggested texts' which cover a variety of topics, ideas, and time periods. Students will read the text and complete their reading challenge booklets to demonstrate their engagement. We have deliberately selected texts which have cross-curricular appeal to ensure we are broadening the reading scope of our learners. The risk assessments must be made known to all teaching and support staff and reviewed regularly.

Raising the profile of Critical thinking skills – Middle & High School

Our department encourage our learners at all levels to consider their studies with a critical perspective. We therefore put an emphasis on their ability to be critical thinkers through a range of strategies, such as open questioning, ranking activities, self-reflection, personal target setting, debating, discussion, interpretation tasks and challenge activities. We ensure that we are embedding these skills within our learners at all ages so that they feel confident in taking these skills into their studies across the curriculum.

School Newspaper – High School

This academic year will see the launch of a new student-led newspaper launched by a group of Grade 11 & 12 journalists. Students will be using their journalistic skills to present viewpoints, ideas, and perspectives about the school community. As well as enhancing the writing abilities of the contributors to the newspaper, we anticipate that students will be broadening their opportunities across the curriculum.

